Communication strategy for the Rohingya Refugee Response

2019/2020

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Background and current situation

The Rohingya have faced systematic discrimination in Myanmar over several decades, including the denial of citizenship. After significant movement of refugees to Bangladesh following violent attacks in Myanmar in 1978, 1991-1992, and 2016, extreme violence in August 2017 triggered the largest and fastest refugee influx into Bangladesh. The Rohingya experienced horrifying atrocities in Myanmar, which an independent United Nations fact-finding mission concluded were serious crimes under international law. As of October 2019, it is estimated that over 900,000 stateless Rohingya refugees reside in Ukhiya and Teknaf sub-districts. The vast majority lives in 34 extremely congested camps, which are prone to natural disasters and can be severely affected by weather events that are common in the region.

Despite significant progress in the two years since the latest influx, the Rohingya remain in an extremely precarious situation. The root causes of their plight in Myanmar have not been addressed and their future is yet uncertain. Return to Myanmar must be voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable. The Government of Myanmar has committed to creating conditions conducive for return, including through bilateral agreements with the Government of Bangladesh and under a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding with UNHCR and UNDP. These efforts are ongoing in Myanmar, but much remains to be done.

The operating environment in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh is incredibly complex with numerous challenges including overcrowding, insufficient basic services, access constraints, disease outbreaks, and protection concerns amongst a highly vulnerable population. There is also the threat of natural disasters such as cyclones, that both require strong contingency planning.

The Government and people of Bangladesh have been incredibly generous in opening their doors to the refugees, acting as first responders and leading the humanitarian response. It is therefore important that the UN and wider international humanitarian community is able to demonstrate the impact of their response, and to advocate for issues of common concern that are impeding the effectiveness and efficiency of the response. In the last years and increasingly in recent months, incidents of tension and violence have been observed, both within the camps and between refugees and host communities, making the implementation of social cohesion projects even more urgent.

Overall goal and vision

The Communications Group Cox's Bazar is working together to strengthen cooperation on communications between all agencies and NGOs involved in the humanitarian and development response, to ensure consistency of public messaging and increase the media profile of humanitarian needs and development activities. The ISCG External Relations Unit will facilitate coordinated public information activities to show the work of the humanitarian community and ensure strategic and continuous advocacy for the main priorities.

Coordinated, inter-agency and inter-organizational communication and advocacy does not replace the individual communication efforts of each organization who may have specific issues they wish to highlight depending on their focus or mandate. However, the aim is to ensure consistency in the information used by the humanitarian community, identify those areas where there are advantages to speaking with one voice through unified messaging and activities, and to focus attention on the most important humanitarian and development issues.

- **Strengthening** our position as the leading voice for the humanitarian response for refugees;
- **Reaching** out consistently to the local, national, and international media and donors
- **Advocate** for the humanitarian community needs
- **Reporting on achievements/results**

Objectives

- Raise awareness of both humanitarian and development needs of the Rohingya refugees and host population and highlight the humanitarian response to the media and international community via off line and social media platforms;
- Develop and coordinate a joint humanitarian campaign in-line with operation' priorities;
- Draft harmonized messaging in relation to humanitarian operations, priorities, challenges, including development activities and concerns.
- Report of the main achievements/results of the humanitarian response giving visibility to key partners and donors

Short and Mid-term Objectives

1. Increase visibility of the overall situation, highlighting priority needs of affected communities and challenges.
2. Increase awareness on role of humanitarian and development actors in the response.
3. Improve coherence through a unified voice via key messages and common audiovisual products
4. Work closely with the Information Management teams to ensure up-to-date data is being presented in all communication products.
5. Ensure a forum for discussion on key issues, concerns and priorities which are cross cutting across the overall humanitarian and development response.

TARGET AUDIENCE (s)

1. Media (national and international): Strengthen and build relationships information sharing and dispelling myths and rumours
2. Governments: advocate to foster further support, political will and engagement for wider distribution of key messages and stronger support for the response
3. General public: Raise awareness and enhance visibility of role of humanitarian and development actors and positive impact of response on both host communities and refugees.

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

External Communications Tools

Digital
- UN and NGOs websites and OCHA portal
- UN, NGOs and ISCG Social Media channels (twitter, facebook, instagram)
- Digital Native Media

Press: print, radio and TV

Offline: Posters, Factsheets, and Leaflets

Public Relations: Public Awareness Events, Press conferences, Campaigns

People assets
- Resident Coordinator (RC), UNHCR Representative, IOM Chief of Mission, and ISCG Senior Coordinator, Senior UN and NGO staff
- PI spokespersons from UN and NGOs
- Celebrities and social influencers

DIGITAL: Develop infographics, videos/photos for each sector highlighting key data. UN and NGOs colleagues with presence on social media are to support visibility efforts through their own platforms, including sharing and adding their voice to content.

PRESS: PI will liaise with the national and international media to encourage coverage of developments, announcing joint programming with Institutions, civil society and other relevant partners, weaving key messages into the media agenda. Stories should demonstrate the humanitarian community's efforts to advance refugee self-reliance, good examples of refugee inclusion, progress made in particular sectors thanks to funding received, the impact of funding gaps, and what could be achieved with enough support. Promote op eds by the RC and Snr Coordinator. Alliances with media; develop strategic relations and improve existing relations with the media promoting positive messaging and highlighting equally, the strong support provided to the host community.

PUBLIC RELATIONS: Comms group will support communication efforts around key events with strategic interviews by UN and NGOs High Level speakers,and including press releases/briefing notes/press conferences, audiovisual material and media. Continue to identity and promote positive examples of local individuals and groups hosting refugees and integrating them into their local communities. Campaigns can also support local integration through addressing growing xenophobia.

PEOPLE ASSETS:
SPOKESPERSONS: RC will primarily focus on strategic issues related to the UN's response, as well as development and humanitarian-development nexus issues; while UNHCR Representative will focus on strategy, legal, policy and operational matters as regards the overall Rohingya refugee response, and IOM Chief of Mission on disaster preparedness and social cohesion. In Cox's Bazar (CXB), the ISCG Senior Coordinator will primarily focus on the current operational realities and challenges. The UNHCR Representative and RC as required will have the final say on common messaging and will decide on any sensitive issues in consultation with the ISCG Senior Coordinator.

Internal Communications Tools
 Meetings (Bi-weekly basis and adhoc); Material exchange (Google drive, emails, TRELLO, others)

MEASURING SUCCESS

- Media reach: measured by circulation (potential viewership of online and print media coverage, TV and radio audience sizes); number of articles in print media quoting or citing information provided in PRs/BNs;
- High-impact media outlets on placement of Humanitarian Community content and/or ensure keys messages are incorporated in high profile coverage;
- Social media engagement: measured by reach and likes, total interactions such as comments, shares, views, and new followers;
- UN/NGO Agencies TV interviews;
- Campaign message delivery/media impact (N. of times core campaign message was picked up and use of Hashtag);
- Spokesperson mentions in the region;
- Number of people attending events; and Number of media attending press conferences.

Products overview

Product	Frequency	Audience	Distribution
Key Messages (ext.)	Updating biweekly	Public	From Communication group
If asked lines	As requited	Private	For Comms Group and HoSOs
Press releases	As required	Public	From Communication group
ISCG sitreps	Weekly	Public	From ISCG via mailchimp
ISCG situation updates	(Tuesday&Thursday)	Public	From ISCG via mailchimp
Advocacy messages	As required	Private	To ISCG sector leads/HoSOs
ISCG Infographics	Weekly & as required	Public	From ISCG mailchimp list
ISCG Media list	Monthly	Internal	For Communication group
ISCG Comms Group list	Monthly	Int./Ext.	For Communication group
Videos	Key events	External	ISCG+ UN + NGOs channels
ISCG Social Media posts	Daily	External	ISCG twitter and Facebook